

## Blu-Ray Review: Daniel Craig, Liev Schreiber Shine, But ‘Defiance’ Misses

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on June 2, 2009 - 11:41am

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CHICAGO – There are many things to like about Edward Zwick’s “[Defiance](#) [6],” including [Daniel Craig](#) [5] and [Liev Schreiber](#) [10]’s excellent performances, a lovely score by James Newton Howard, and, of course, the important subject matter, but the overdone screenplay and Zwick’s typically melodramatic direction just barely sink the film, although a nice Blu-Ray release should help make a few of its flaws easier to overlook.



“Defiance” is a story about an amazing human struggle for survival led by the Bielski brothers - the reluctant Tuvia (Craig) and the powerful Zus (Schreiber). The brothers are joined by their younger brother Asael (Jamie Bell), a young man who follows their every move but often gets stuck in the middle.



Defiance was released on Blu-Ray on June 2nd, 2009.  
*Photo credit: Paramount*

The film opens with the mass execution by Nazi soldiers at Novogrudok that killed a large portion of the Bielski’s family and friends. At first, the Bielskis think of only of revenge, which they get, and then they move towards the more long-term concern of survival. Gathering as many survivors as they can, they create a makeshift community in the Naliboki forest. Issues of leadership, violence, and the conflict between merely hiding or actually attacking make for a compelling true story.





Defiance was released on Blu-Ray on June 2nd, 2009.

Photo credit: Paramount

The story itself may be compelling, but it's not the right fit for the bombastic Edward Zwick. As he has several times in epic films like "Blood Diamond" and "The Last Samurai," Zwick falls back on the crutches of the standard action movie. There's so much slow motion, ear-shattering explosions, melodramatic monologues, and other over-used devices that it sinks the true inherent power of the story.

A script that blends a Moses allegory with long, boring speeches doesn't help draw in the audience. I never once felt like I was in the woods with the Bielskis. They were merely heroes in an action movie and the true emotion of the piece is never allowed to register.

"Defiance" is far from a complete disaster. Despite Zwick's penchant to over-direct and the cold screenplay, Craig and Schreiber find ways to break through the action and develop three-dimensional characters.

The film is vastly helped by a very good Blu-Ray release with a commentary, featurettes, and striking video and audio.

"Defiance" is presented in 1080p High Definition and Eduardo Serra's cinematography looks great in HD. The picture is excellently mixed, not overly vibrant or polished (you wouldn't want the Bielskis fight for survival to look too plastic) but perfect in its line detail. The audio mix is even better. Ed Zwick does nothing subtly and his action sequences will rattle the silverware in 5.1 HD audio.

The special features for "Defiance" include a commentary by Zwick, a 26-minute featurettes called "Defiance: Return to the Forest," a 13-minute historical featurette called "Children of the Otriad: The Families Speak," the 7-minute self-explanatory "Scoring Defiance," and two minutes of photos of living survivors called "Bielski Partison Survivors". Two trailers make up the "And More!" advertised on the back of the case.

The featurettes and commentary expertly balance just enough information about the making of the film with details about the true story that inspired it.

*'Defiance' is released by Paramount Home Video and stars Daniel Craig, Liev Schreiber, Jamie Bell, Alexa Davalos, Allan Corduner, Mark Feuerstein, and Iben Hjejle. It was written by Clayton Frohman & Edward Zwick and directed by Zwick. The Blu-Ray and DVD were released on June 2nd, 2009. It is rated R.*



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By [BRIAN TALLERICO](#) [14]

Content Director

HollywoodChicago.com

[brian@hollywoodchicago.com](mailto:brian@hollywoodchicago.com) [13]

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